



Local Agency Formation Commission
LAFCO of Napa County

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Agenda Item No. 7b

January 29, 2007

TO: Local Agency Formation Commission

FROM: Keene Simonds, Executive Officer

SUBJECT: ***Comprehensive Study of Fire Protection Services: Supplemental Report – Final Written Determinations***

The Commission will review final written determinations that have been prepared by staff as part of the municipal service review portion of the *Comprehensive Study of Fire Protection Services*. These determinations address the nine service factors the Commission is required to consider as part of its service review mandate under California Government Code and are being presented for adoption as part of a separate draft resolution.

Staff has prepared final written determinations as part of the municipal service review portion of the *Comprehensive Study of Fire Protection Services*. These determinations draw on information collected as part of an earlier report prepared by P&D Consultants and make statements regarding the nine service factors the Commission is required to consider as part of its service review mandate. Staff presented these determinations to the Commission in draft-form at its December 4, 2006 meeting. The determinations were then circulated for review and comment to each of the five affected agencies and interested parties. Comments were received from the City of Calistoga and have been summarized as part of an attached memorandum. No substantive changes have been made to the determinations.

Final written determinations are provided below and are being presented to the Commission for consideration and adoption as part of a separate draft resolution.

WRITTEN DETERMINATIONS

General Policy Statement (Government Code §56430(a)):

- a) The role of local fire protection providers has transformed significantly over the last several decades to include an expanded range of public safety activities. This expansion includes a greater emphasis on fire prevention, rescue, and emergency medical services. LAFCO incorporates the review of these expanded activities under the term “fire protection services.”

Jack Gingles, Chair
Mayor, City of Calistoga

Cindy Coffey, Commissioner
Councilmember, City of American Canyon

Juliana Inman, Alternate Commissioner
Councilmember, City of Napa

Brad Wagenknecht, Vice-Chair
County of Napa Supervisor, 1st District

Bill Dodd, Commissioner
County of Napa Supervisor, 4th District

Mark Luce, Alt. Commissioner
County of Napa Supervisor, 2nd District

Brian J. Kelly, Commissioner
Representative of the General Public

Vacant, Alternate Commissioner
Representative of the General Public

Keene Simonds
Executive Officer

Infrastructure Needs or Deficiencies (Government Code §56430(a)(1)):

- a) Public infrastructure is generally adequate in providing an appropriate level of fire protection service in Napa County.
- b) There are distinct differences in the availability and capacity of fire protection services throughout Napa County. These differences, which are primarily drawn from variations in service and staff arrangements, reflect the independent practices and policies of the local agencies.
- c) Response times for fire protection services are important benchmarks in assessing performance and allocating resources. The National Fire Protection Association has established response time standards that serve as reasonable guidelines in measuring service in Napa County.
- d) In the year evaluated, the average response times for the American Canyon Fire Protection District and the Cities of Calistoga, Napa, and St. Helena for all service calls were less than six minutes, which is the standard recommended by the National Fire Protection Association. These average response times demonstrate that all four agencies are meeting their current service demands in an efficient and timely manner.

In 2004, the average response times for the American Canyon Fire Protection District and the Cities of Calistoga, Napa, and St. Helena for all service calls were 4:48, 4:52, 4:37, and 5:29, respectively.

- e) Response times for fire protection services provided by the County of Napa, which includes the operations of nine independent volunteer organizations, have not been consistently recorded at all times. The absence of reliable response times makes it difficult to effectively measure the condition and level of service in the unincorporated areas.
- f) Providing emergency medical services represents the largest demand for fire protection providers in Napa County. As life expectancies increase, local agencies will need to develop and dedicate additional resources to maintain existing service levels.

In 2004, the American Canyon Fire Protection District, Cities of Calistoga, Napa, and St. Helena, and the County of Napa reported that calls for emergency medical service represented approximately 66%, 65%, 68%, 65%, and 47% of their total call volumes, respectively.

Growth and Population Projections (Government Code §56430(a)(2)):

- a) The population projections issued by the Association of Bay Area Governments are reasonable estimates of the current and future population of Napa County.
- b) The Association of Bay Area Governments projects an annual growth rate for Napa County of approximately 0.6 percent over the next 20 years. These projections indicate that more than four-fifths of new growth will occur in the Cities of American Canyon and Napa. This distribution of growth will generate considerable new demands for fire protection services in south Napa County.

The Association of Bay Area Governments projects a total population increase for Napa County of 17,000 by 2025. Approximately 88% (15,000) of this growth is expected to occur in the Cities of American Canyon and Napa.

- c) The Association of Bay Area Governments estimates that the largest percentage of new growth over the next 20 years in Napa County will occur in the City of American Canyon. As a separate legal entity, the American Canyon Fire Protection District will need to work closely with American Canyon to ensure that fire protection services can be extended efficiently and economically to new growth without diminishing existing service levels.

The Association of Bay Area Governments estimates that the City of American Canyon will experience an overall population increase of nearly 39% over the next 20 years.

Financing Constraints and Opportunities (Government Code §56430(a)(3)):

- a) Voter-approved initiatives in California have constrained the ability of governmental agencies to fund fire protection services through new assessments and taxes. These initiatives have engendered local agencies to emphasize economizing existing resources to address increases in service costs and demands.
- b) The principal cost underlying fire protection service is labor. Continued increases in labor-related costs and the constraints on developing new revenue sources will increasingly challenge local agencies in balancing future expenditures and revenues.
- c) The decision by the County of Napa to contract for fire protection services with the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection reflects the financial constraints associated with developing and operating a fire department.

Cost Avoidance Opportunities (Government Code §56430(a)(4)):

- a) Local agencies have made a concerted effort to avoid unnecessary expenditures by economizing existing resources and developing shared arrangements with other agencies to provide and coordinate fire protection services. These efforts have helped to control cost increases, establish economies of scale, and avoid duplication of services.
- b) The City of St. Helena and the County of Napa benefit from measurable cost-savings as a result of their arrangements for volunteer-based fire protection services.

Opportunities for Rate Restructuring (Government Code §56430(a)(5)):

- a) Fire protection services in Napa County are principally funded through general tax revenues. Opportunities to restructure rates are primarily limited to impact fees charged to new development and would not have a measurable impact on overall revenues.

Opportunities for Shared Facilities (Government Code 56430(a)(6)):

- a) Local agencies have partnered to establish an effective network of shared resources with respect to providing fire protection services in Napa County. These partnerships, which include a series of automatic and mutual aid agreements, help to ensure that an adequate level of fire protection service is available at all times within each agency's respective jurisdiction.
- b) All five local fire protection providers are signatories to the State of California's Master Mutual Aid Program, which establishes a formal process for these agencies to voluntarily receive and provide assistance during declared emergencies. This program expedites the delivery of additional resources to local agencies in need and fosters cooperative relationships throughout California.
- c) The County of Napa provides dispatch services involving fire protection for the American Canyon Fire Protection District and the Cities of Calistoga and St. Helena. This arrangement coordinates the efficient delivery of services within the affected jurisdictions and facilitates future opportunities to share additional resources between agencies.

Government Structure Opportunities (Government Code §56430(a)(7)):

- a) Federal, state, and local agencies share proportional responsibility in providing fire protection services in Napa County. Local agencies, including the American Canyon Fire Protection District, the Cities of Calistoga, Napa, and St. Helena, and the County of Napa, assume the greatest role in fire protection service. Service boundaries for these local agencies are generally well-defined and do not overlap.
- b) The Cities of Calistoga and St. Helena and the County of Napa depend on volunteers to provide fire protection services within their respective jurisdictions. Increasing demographic changes will increasingly challenge these agencies to recruit and retain a sufficient number of volunteers to maintain adequate service levels in the future.
- c) Volunteer-based fire protection services have been effective and sources of community identity throughout Napa County. As an information tool, and in response to changing demographics, LAFCO should conduct a governance study to evaluate alternative government structure options involving the volunteer-based fire protection services of the 1) Cities of Calistoga and St. Helena and 2) the County of Napa. The focus of the study would be to identify and evaluate whether alternative government structures would help sustain the long-term effectiveness of fire protection services in these communities.

California Government Code §56378 authorizes LAFCO to initiate and conduct special studies to help fulfill its legislative mandate to encourage the orderly formation and development of local agencies.

- d) California Government Code §56133 designates LAFCO as the governmental agency responsible for authorizing cities and special districts to provide new or extended services, including fire protection, by contract or agreement outside their jurisdictional or sphere boundaries. While certain exemptions exist, local agencies should request and, if necessary, receive approval from LAFCO before providing new or extended fire protection services outside their boundaries.

Evaluation of Management Efficiencies (Government Code §56430(a)(8)):

- a) All five local agencies providing fire protection services in Napa County prepare summaries of past and projected revenues and expenditures involving fire protection services as part of their annual or biannual budgets. These collective budget processes are conducted in an open and transparent manner and provides a clear directive towards staff in prioritizing local resources.

- b) All five local agencies providing fire protection services in Napa County maintain adequate reserves to help support their current service levels. These reserves reflect prudent management as they help to ensure that each agency has sufficient working capital to protect against unanticipated costs or shortfalls in revenues.
- c) The American Canyon Fire Protection District and the Cities of Calistoga, Napa, and St. Helena have adopted response time standards with respect to providing fire protection services. These standards provide each agency with effective performance measures that promotes efficiency and accountability.
- d) The County of Napa would benefit from adopting response time standards involving fire protection services in the unincorporated areas. The adoption of response time standards would provide the County with an effective tool to measure performance and standardize service levels.

Local Accountability and Governance (Government Code §56430(a)(9)):

- a) Each of the five local agencies providing fire protection services in Napa County are governed by elected officials that are accountable to their jurisdictional constituents.
- b) The administration and staff of the five local agencies providing fire protection services in Napa County demonstrate a commitment to public outreach and communication. These efforts facilitate local accountability and participation in local governance.